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## **EPA Update on Gold King Mine Response Efforts for August 16, 2015**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is committed to working closely with response agencies and state and local officials to ensure the safety of citizens, respond to concerns and to evaluate the water impacted by the spill. Today EPA provided the following updates:

### **Website Updates-NEW INFO**

Photos Related to Gold King Mine Response:

<http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/photos-related-gold-king-mine-response>

History of the Gold King Mine Fact Sheet:

<http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/gold-king-mine-watershed-fact-sheet>

Gold King Mine Response Website in Spanish:

<http://espanol.epa.gov/espanol/respuesta-de-emergencia-al-derrame-de-la-mina-gold-king-en-agosto-2015>

Latest data update:

<http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/epa-statement-water-quality-data-collected-san-juan-river-between-farmington-and>

## **Mine Discharge Treatment**

The Gold King Mine is releasing water at the rate of approximately 600 gallon per minute. Water is captured and treated at a system of pounds before being discharged to Cement Creek.

## **Unified Command in Durango, Colorado**

Irrigation ditches drawing from the Animas River in Colorado have been flushed and continue to come back online to meet water needs. Water quality data show water meets criteria for agricultural purposes established by the state of Colorado.

EPA teams continue to collect water samples in the Animas River and in shallow, domestic private wells adjacent to the river.

## **Unified Command in Farmington, New Mexico**

In New Mexico, EPA has a team of 69 people consisting of federal on-scene coordinators, water quality experts, technicians and contractors supporting the response to the spill. Daily information meetings at the Farmington Convention Center will resume on Monday, August 17.

Last night, New Mexico announced its determination that drinking water systems and recreational activity along the Animas and San Juan rivers can resume based on water quality sampling results collected by both New Mexico Environment Department and the EPA. Reopening drinking water system intakes and allowing recreational activities is a state and local decision and we believe they have taken appropriate steps in arriving at this this decision. EPA sampling results from the river collected last week similarly show that water quality conditions are returning toward pre-event conditions.

EPA continues to collect water samples from nine locations in San Juan River near intakes for Aztec, Farmington, Lower Valley Water Users Association, Morning Star Water Supply System and the North Star Water User Association. EPA will continue to sample, analyze, and make data available to support local decision makers to make the best informed decisions. Validated sampling data for the Animas and San Juan Rivers from the Northern Border of New Mexico to Navajo Nation collected from Aug. 9 to Aug. 10, 2015 has been released.

New Mexico also announced that private domestic well water use along the Animas River can resume based on water quality sampling results collected by both New Mexico Environment Department and the EPA. EPA and NMED collected 25 water quality samples from private domestic wells yesterday.

Additionally, New Mexico reopened irrigation ditches along the Animas River for normal

irrigation and livestock watering operations yesterday. EPA delivered water to three livestock locations.

## **Navajo Nation**

EPA released additional water quality data from Aug. 7 to Aug. 11, 2015, on the San Juan River between Farmington and Shiprock, New Mexico yesterday. The August 7 data was collected for baseline purposes to understand river conditions at the Hogback monitoring location, prior to the impact from the Gold King Mine release.

To assess the impacts of the release at the Gold King Mine, water quality samples were collected at four locations. Each surface water sample was analyzed for 24 metals including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury.

Due to the highly variable conditions typical of this segment of the river, additional testing will be conducted, and EPA continues to work closely with the Navajo Nation EPA on assessing drinking water, agriculture, livestock, and other critical water needs. View the results: <http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/gold-king-mine-data-august-15-2015>

Water quality testing continues with surface water and sediment sampling and monitoring (pH, conductivity, turbidity) along the San Juan River in the Navajo Nation at 11 monitoring sites.

EPA Region 9 participated in a public meeting attended by approximately 150 officials and residents from four Navajo Nation chapters and other senior Navajo Nation officials, including Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez and Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch. Community members raised concerns regarding reimbursement claim Form 95, data availability, water availability for livestock, agriculture and human consumption, and short and long-term health impacts from river exposure.

The Navajo Nation has identified 13 locations for EPA to distribute water for agriculture and livestock use and continues providing over 16,000 gallons of non-potable water per day to each of these locations. EPA also continues to provide hay/alfalfa bales to Navajo Nation chapter locations for livestock needs

## **EPA Staff Deployed**

EPA currently has deployed more than 210 employees and contractors for the response. The U.S. Coast Guard has provided 14 responders. There are also currently at least 20 different federal, state and local agencies involved in the response working to help ensure the health and safety of the public

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